

# The Newly Discovered Wall Paintings in Saydet el-Rih in Enfeh (Lebanon) through Graphic Survey

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**Abstract.** This paper deciphers for the first time the badly damaged and barely discernible wall paintings of Saydet el Rih in Enfeh (Lebanon) using graphic surveys. This procedure consists of copying all traces of the paintings and recording their chromatic values and stratigraphy, in order to understand and visualise the creative process behind them, both stylistically and iconographically.

**Keywords:** Lebanese Medieval Paintings; Saydet el-Rih; Graphic Drawing; Stratigraphic Survey; Archaeo-Graphic Drawing.

## [es] Las pinturas murales recién descubiertas en Saydet el-Rih en Enfeh (Líbano) a través del análisis gráfico

**Resumen.** Este trabajo descifra las pinturas murales gravemente dañadas y apenas discernibles de Saydet el Rih en Enfeh (Líbano) mediante diferentes análisis gráficos. Este procedimiento consiste en copiar todos los vestigios de las pinturas y registrar sus valores cromáticos y estratigrafía, con el fin de comprender y visualizar el proceso creativo que hay detrás de ellas, tanto estilística como iconográficamente.

**Palabras clave:** Pinturas medievales libanesas; Saydet el-Rih; dibujo gráfico; levantamiento estratigráfico; dibujo arqueográfico.

**Summary.** 1. Introduction. 2. The paintings and their graphical survey. 2.1. First layer of painted plaster. 2.2. Second layer of painted plaster. 3. Stylistic processes through graphic survey. 4. Conclusions. 5. Written sources and bibliographical references.

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## 1. Introduction

Located on the shores of the Mediterranean, the church of Saydet el-Rih (Our Lady of the Wind) in Enfeh, present day Lebanon, was built between the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century on a network of cisterns dating from the Iron Age (Figs. 1, 2)<sup>2</sup>. The church is composed of a single nave oriented to the east by a low protruding apse. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the barrel-vaulted and windowless nave was extended to the west by a kind of rectangular porch, covered by a grained vault. This porch, which clearly deviates to the

north from the main axis of the building, serve as an entrance hall. It has two doors, one on the south wall and the other on the west wall. Outside, the remains of a rectangular structure, leaning against the north wall, date back to the same period<sup>3</sup>.

Saydet el-Rih contains wall paintings dating from the period of Latin domination (1102-1289)<sup>4</sup>. At that time, the Enfeh peninsula was a vassal lordship of Tripoli. As early as 1152, its management was entrusted to the Raynouard, originally from Meynes, France. In 1205, the Count of Tripoli, Bohemond IV of Antioch, expelled Raynouard III and seized the barony. Following the con-

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<sup>2</sup> Nadine Panayot-Haroun et al., “Mission archéologique d’Enfeh. Résultats préliminaires des travaux de prospection et de fouille de 2011 à 2015”, *Baal* 16 (2016): 242; Nadine Panayot-Haroun, “Anfeh Unveiled: Historical Background, Ongoing Research, and Future Prospects”, *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies* 3, no. 4 (2015): 402-403.

<sup>3</sup> Panayot-Haroun, “Anfeh Unveiled...”, 403; Panayot-Haroun et al., “Mission archéologique d’Enfeh...”, 242.

<sup>4</sup> Erica Cruikshank Dodd, *Medieval painting in the Lebanon* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), 226; Lévon Nordiguian et Jean-Claude Voisin, *Châteaux et églises du Moyen Age au Liban* (Beyrouth: Terre du Liban, 2009), 381-82; Mat Immerzeel, *Identity puzzles: medieval Christian art in Syria and Lebanon* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 87-88; Nada Hélou, *La Fresque (II) dans les anciennes églises du liban. Régions du nord* (Mansourieh: Aleph, 2008), 45.

quest of Tripoli by the Mamelukes in 1289, the Franks ceded Enfeh without a fight<sup>5</sup>. The Mamluks occupied the site for a short time before destroying, among other things, the castle and fortifications, by order of Sultan Qalaoun<sup>6</sup>. It seems that Saydet el-Rih was part of this destruction, given the traces of soot on the walls and the accumulation of a number of liturgical materials, architectural elements, and medieval ceramics in one of the cisterns under the church<sup>7</sup>. As a result, Saydet el-Rih was left in ruins for some time, until the recent reconstruction of part of its apse, apse arch, barrel vault, and both north and west walls of the entrance porch.



Figure 1. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, southeast corner.  
Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.



Figure 2. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, northwestern corner.  
Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

The medieval wall paintings of Saydet el-Rih have been exposed to the salty sea breeze, erosion and all kinds of

inclement weather and vandalism, as the church has been in ruins for centuries. The surviving decoration has therefore lost its original lustre and the paintings have become almost imperceptible traces. The pigments, made with mineral and organic materials, were faded, flaked, melted into their support, or shrouded in a thick layer of dross and calcite. Due to the poor state of the paintings, researchers studying medieval wall painting in Lebanon have been unable to decipher the iconographic content of Enfeh in its entirety<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, the only image partially visible was that of the holy rider. It was only after the recent restoration of the collapsed church walls and preservation of the painted plaster that we were able to stabilise the conservation of the wall paintings and stop their progressive degradation.

The conservation and cleaning of the painted decoration, carried out in September 2016 and 2017, revealed two superimposed layers of painted plaster and brought new images to light, though they have been heavily altered<sup>9</sup>. Their poor state of conservation required an in-depth analysis of the painted walls using graphic surveys, which made it possible to decipher for the first time the iconographic programme and clarify its interpretation for further study<sup>10</sup>.

This paper presents graphic drawings and stratigraphic surveys to offer a thorough view of the badly damaged and barely discernible decoration. This procedure consists of copying all traces of the paintings, their chromatic values and stratigraphy, to gain an understanding and visualization of the creative process, both stylistically and iconographically.

## 2. The paintings and their graphical survey

In mural painting, graphical or stratigraphic survey is equivalent to the documentation of data in an archaeological excavation, giving meaning to the remains discovered. It follows, roughly, the same principle used for elevations in building archaeology, by transcribing all that can be seen on and understood from the painted surface<sup>11</sup>. Accompanied by written reports, photographic documentation, levelling and measurements, the graphic survey requires a faithful reproduction of all traces of paint on translucent tracing paper. There, each colour has a code and each layer a precise cryptogram in order to facilitate subsequent reconstruction. This technique, which

<sup>5</sup> Panayot-Haroun et al., "Mission archéologique d'Enfeh", 267; Paul Deschamps, *Les châteaux des croisés en Terre-Sainte. III, La défense du Comté de Tripoli et de la Principauté d'Antioche: étude historique, géographique, toponymique et monumentale* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1973), 324; Wipertus H. Rudt de Collenberg, "Les "Raynouard", seigneurs de Nephin et de Maraclé en Terre sainte, et leur parenté en Languedoc", *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 7, no. 27 (1964): 289-311.

<sup>6</sup> Panayot-Haroun et al., "Mission archéologique d'Enfeh", 267; Hassan Salamé-Sarkis, *Contribution à l'histoire de Tripoli et de sa région à l'époque des croisades* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1980), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Nadine Panayot Haroun, "Excavation Results of the Chapel of Saydet El Rih "Our Lady of the Wind", Anfeh", *Berytus Archaeological Studies* 59 (2016): 190-200.

<sup>8</sup> Nordiguian et Voisin, *Châteaux et églises du Moyen Age au Liban...*, 381-382; Immerzeel, *Identity puzzles...*, 87-88; Hérou, *La Fresque (II)*..., 45; Dodd, *Medieval painting in the Lebanon...*, 226.

<sup>9</sup> In the summer of 2016 and 2017, I collaborated with a team led by Krzysztof Chmielewski, Professor at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, in the conservation and cleaning of the remaining painted decoration.

<sup>10</sup> Rafca Youssef Nasr, "The Newly Discovered Paintings of Saydet El-Rih in Enfeh (Lebanon)", *Studia Orientalia Christiana-Collectanea* (2021-2022), in press.

<sup>11</sup> Juliette Rollier-Hanselmann, "D'Auxerre à Cluny: techniques de la peinture murale entre le VIIIe et le XIIe siècle en Bourgogne", *Cahiers de Civilisation médiévale* 40 (1997): 57-90; Christian Sapin, *Peindre à Auxerre au Moyen Âge, IVe-XIe siècle. Dix ans de recherches à l'abbaye Saint-Germain et à la cathédrale Saint-Étienne d'Auxerre* (Paris: Éditions du CTHS, 1999); Maria Andaloro, "La parete palinsesto: 1900, 2000", in *Dans Santa Maria Antiqua al Foro Romano cento anni dopo (Atti del colloquio internazionale, Roma, 5-6 maggio 2000)*, John Osborne, J. Rasmus Brant, Giuseppe Morganti, eds. (Rome: Campisano, 2004), 97-111.

involves moving from material support to a graphic image, is largely effective in understanding drawings, the superimposition of pictorial layers, the work of painters, and the processes or technique of a painting, among other things<sup>12</sup>.

An accurate survey and a faithful transcription of the painted structure, both in terms of details and measurements, allow for a better interpretation of the paintings, especially those that are largely effaced. Without this, less legible and deteriorated drawings cannot be deciphered and analysed properly. The next step is to digitise the layer using an appropriate vector drawing program. At this stage, the survey attempts to digitally revive the original appearance of the paintings by providing a graphic rendering of the coloured surfaces. By filling in some of the gaps and highlighting the most tenuous marks, the digital reconstruction allows the painted surface to be standardised and certain shapes to be restored. This process constitutes a practical material support for the study and understanding of painted representations, since it offers the possibility of manipulating and grasping all the pictorial details.

Considering the complexity concerning the layers of plaster and paint, digital reconstruction meets the requirements of very precise documentation and the imperatives of conserving painted heritage. It is a means of research which aims to organize, classify, inventory and safeguard the appearance of paintings which may disappear over the centuries, while avoiding direct contact with them. Indeed, the digital work offers a pictorial restitution which, although often partial, remains extremely faithful to the painted images. This allows researchers to better visualize the pictorial layers and their drawings, especially those that are difficult to discern with the naked eye.

It is thanks to this process of graphic surveys that it was possible to decipher, for the first time, the badly damaged paintings of Saydet El-Rih, which are spread over two superimposed layers of painted plaster.

### 1.1. First layer of painted plaster

The conch of the low and small apse seems to feature, just above the level of the altar, an image of Theophany-*Deësis*: Christ accompanied by interceding saints, often the Virgin Mary and the Forerunner, John the Baptist (Fig. 3). This is a very common theme in the Levant and can be found in the apses of all medieval churches in present-day Lebanon, with a few exceptions (featuring the Virgin with the Child and the Resurrection)<sup>13</sup>. In

Enfeh, the bust of the haloed figure of Christ can still be seen at the centre of the composition. Dressed in a red tunic and blue mantle, he probably held the Book in his left hand and made the usual gesture of speech with his right. Of the two supplicants, only a few scattered and heavily eroded traces of red remain on the right side, probably indicating the conventional *maphorion* belonging to Mary. It should be noted that the Virgin often stands to the right of Christ in the Theophany-*Deësis*. The hand stretched out in prayer at the far left of the scene most likely belongs to the Precursor.

The north and south walls of the nave have lost the overwhelming majority of their painted decoration. Only a few tiny fragments of painted plaster can be seen – two of which reveal the existence of images of holy soldiers. The composition adorning the western end of the south wall of the nave, showing a holy horseman, belongs to an outer layer of painted plaster.

Enfeh is one of the few churches in present-day Lebanon with a vault decorated with medieval paintings. The vault of the central bay of the monastic church of Saydet Hamatoura shows an image of the Judgment (13<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>14</sup>. In the monastery church of Saydet Kaf-toune<sup>15</sup>, small fragments of painted plaster, preserved on the lower level of the intrados of the vault of the nave, also reveal the vault's painted decoration (13<sup>th</sup> century).

The first pictorial composition, adorning the eastern end of the north side of the barrel vault in Enfeh, shows remnants of a figure dressed in a blue tunic and green cloak. He appears to be leaning towards the east, his right arm stretched out in the same direction, while he turns his head to the left (Fig. 4). He looks at an angel placed in a celestial segment of the scene's upper left-hand corner. The angel, dressed in red, is depicted as a bust. He reaches his hand out toward the figure in question. Below the celestial segment where the angel is located, there are two red flames over a mountain pattern. This is probably the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, where the angel intervenes to stop the patriarch's sacrificial gesture. The figure of Isaac, which should be placed in front of the figure of Abraham, is completely destroyed in Enfeh. The Sacrifice of Isaac was often linked to the liturgical space. In present-day Lebanon, the image resides in the Holy of Holies, as in Mar Tadros of Behdidat (thirteenth century)<sup>16</sup> and in the chapel annexed to the Basilica of Saint George in Rashkida (thirteenth century)<sup>17</sup>.

*l'Orient* 23 (1998): 33-59; Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords* (Paris: The Pindar Press 1991); Tania Velmans, "L'Image de la Déisis dans les églises de Géorgie et dans celles d'autres régions du monde byzantin", *Cahiers archéologiques* 29 (1981): 47-102.

<sup>14</sup> Mahmoud Zibawi, *Images chrétiennes du Levant: les décors peints des églises syro-libanaises au Moyen Âge* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2009), 62; Hélou, *La Fresque (II)*..., 54; Nordiguian et Voisin, *Châteaux et églises du Moyen Âge au Liban*; Dodd, *Medieval painting in the Lebanon*..., 66.

<sup>15</sup> Krzysztof Chmielewski et al., "The Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Kaftūn (Northern Lebanon) and Its Wall Paintings: Preliminary Report 2009-2010", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 67 (2013): 291-322.

<sup>16</sup> Nordiguian et Voisin, *Châteaux et églises du Moyen Âge au Liban*..., 367-68; Immerzeel, *Identity puzzles*..., 101-105; Nada Hélou, "Le décor des absides dans les églises médiévales du Liban", *Iconographica* 5 (2006): 33-36; Dodd, *Medieval painting in the Lebanon*..., 338-342.

<sup>17</sup> Rafca Youssef Nasr, "Double-Apse Churches Through the Sacred Images and the Liturgy: The Chapel Annexed to St. George of Rash-

<sup>12</sup> Carolina Sarrade, "Les relevés archéographiques des peintures de la nef de Saint-Savin", *Revue d'Auvergne* (2012): 403-418; Carolina Sarrade, "Comprendre la technique des peintures romanes par le relevé stratigraphique", *In Situ: Revue de Patrimoines* 22 (2013): 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.4000/insitu.10641>; Marcello Angheben, "L'apport des relevés stratigraphiques à Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe. L'exemple du Sacrifice de Noé", *In Situ: Revue des patrimoines* 22 (2013): 1-17, <https://doi.org/10.4000/insitu.10636>; Carolina Sarrade, "La nef de Saint-Savin: deux ateliers, deux techniques, approche archéologique des peintures", *Les Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa* 47 (2016): 103-16.

<sup>13</sup> Rafca Youssef Nasr, "Les images presbytérales des églises du Liban à la lumière de la liturgie eucharistique: les théophanies aux XIIIe -XIIIe siècles" (Poitiers, Université de Poitiers, 2016); Nada Hélou, "La représentation de la Déisis-vision dans deux églises du Liban", *Parole de*

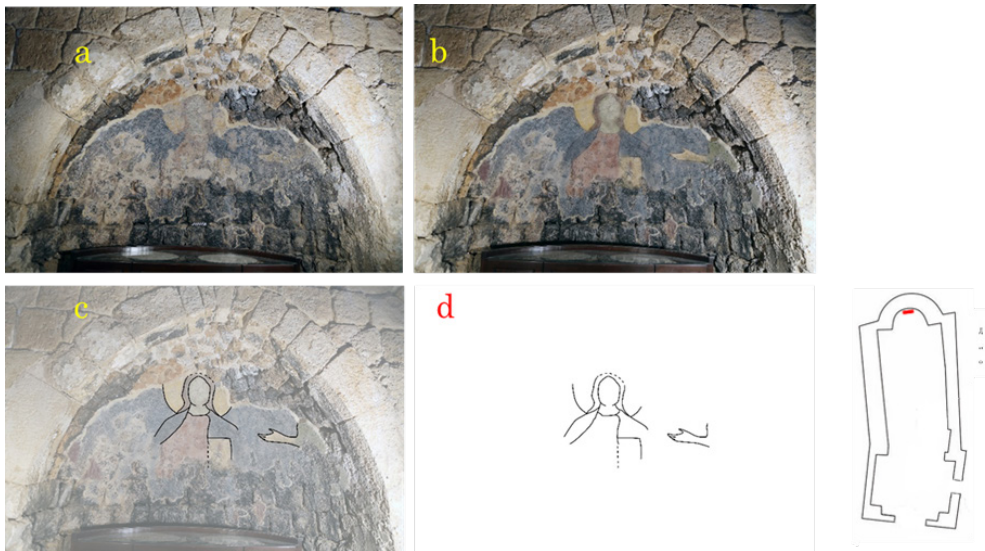


Figure 3. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, apse, Theophany-*Deësis*. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction, c. Graphic drawing, d. Graphic drawing. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

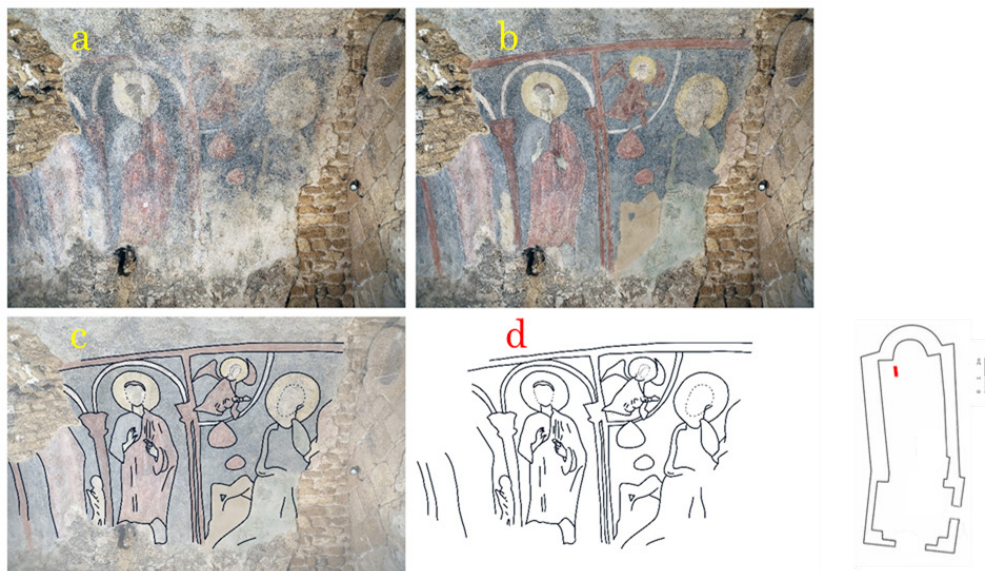


Figure 4. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the eastern end of the north side of the barrel vault, the Sacrifice of Isaac and the theories of saints. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction, c. Graphic drawing, d. Graphic drawing. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

The composition adjacent to the scene of Isaac's sacrifice on the north side of the barrel vault appears to show an alignment of saints standing in an arcade supported by slender columns with capitals (Fig. 4). One can hardly see the lower part of their bodies. Only the first figure, in the immediate vicinity of Isaac's sacrifice, remains fully visible under the arch. This figure, carrying a scroll, is depicted with a blue tunic and red cloak. The second saint, from the eastern side, seems to be accompanied by a small figure, as revealed by the archaeo-graphic drawing. It is undoubtedly a suppliant. The alignment of holy figures standing in

an arcade generally suggests the apostles, often accompanied by prophets and prelates. This is the case, for example, in Mar Tadros of Behdidat (thirteenth century) and Mar Elias en-Nahr of Kfar Qahel (thirteenth century) in present-day Lebanon<sup>18</sup>. A figure in episcopal attire stands next to this line of saints on the west side, without being shown under an arch supported by columns (Fig. 5). The bishop clearly wears the *omophorion*, *epitrichelion*, and *epigonation*. It is likely that an identical composition of standing saints stood symmetrically on the south side of the vault, but what remains of the mortar shows only minute traces of colour.

kida (Lebanon)", *Studia Orientalia Christiana-Collectanea* 52-53 (2020 2019): 259-78; Lévon Nordiguian, "L'église Mar Girios (Saint-Georges) de Rachkida: aménagements liturgiques et nouvelles peintures murales", *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 68 (2020 2019): 243-73; Nordiguian et Voisin, *Châteaux et églises du Moyen Age au Liban*, 407; Hérou, "Le décor des absides...", 37-40; Dodd, *Medieval painting in the Lebanon...*, 272-79.

<sup>18</sup> Rafca Youssef Nasr, "Les peintures de Mar Élias en-Nahr à Kfar Qahel (Liban) du XIIIe siècle. Étude iconographique et interprétation", *Chronos* 39 (2019): 23-35.



Figure 5. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the western end of the north side of the barrel vault, a bishop. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction, c. Graphic drawing, d. Graphic drawing. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

The last two figures, closing out the paintings on both sides of the western ends of the barrel vault, open the scene of the Judgment that unfolds in the entrance porch. Two

standing angels are rolling, each on their own side, the firmament of heaven (Fig. 6). The angel depicted on the north side of the barrel vault is barely discernible *in situ*.



Figure 6. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the western end of the south side of the barrel vault, an angel furling the scroll of the heavens. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction, c. Graphic drawing, d. Graphic drawing. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

The Judgment, which is also found in Mar Elias of Bziza and in Saydet Hammatoura in present-day Lebanon<sup>19</sup>, seems to have filled the entire entrance porch of Saydet el-Rih, but only the groin vault and the southern wall and its supports retain some of their decoration. Four standing angels adorn the top of the groin vault, while the Apostolic tribunal adorns its barrels (Fig. 7, 8). Disciples are divided into groups of two on each side of the north, west, and south intrados. They are shown enthroned, holding a book in their left hands and gesturing with their right. They appear to be dressed in blue tunics and coats, sometimes yellow and sometimes red.

The centre of the lunette on the south wall shows two angels turning away from each other and blowing into

their trumpets (Fig. 7, 9). The angel on the west side seems to hold a cup, as shown by the archaeo-graphical drawing. These two trumpeting angels are dressed in blue tunics and pink coats. Below them, there are personifications of the Sea (left) and the Land (right). Crowned with a tiara, the allegory of the Earth sits on a quadruped and holds a snake. As for the allegory of the sea, it is shown emerging from the water, filled with fish and sea creatures (Fig. 10). It carries a sailboat with both hands. The door in the south wall provides the separation between the terrestrial and maritime worlds dominated by the personifications of the Earth and the Sea, respectively. The entire lower part of the painting is almost completely destroyed.



Figure 7. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, southern side of entrance porch. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction, c. Graphic drawing, d. Graphic drawing. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

The west side of the south-eastern support of the entrance porch shows the upper part of a haloed figure dressed in green (Fig. 11). The upper part of the east side of the south-western support shows a black compartment that appears to contain an inscription, of which only fragments remain. The upper part of the north side of the same support shows a black compartment filled with stylized skulls (Figs. 7, 12). The theme of Judgment presented in the icons no 150 (11<sup>th</sup> century) and no 151 (12<sup>th</sup> century) of Sinai, the mosaics of Torcello (executed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and reworked in the 12<sup>th</sup> century) present the same motif of piled up skulls that appears in Enfeh.

## 2.2. Second layer of painted plaster

In some places on the northern and southern walls of the nave, as well as the southern wall of the entrance porch, we can see a superposition of two or three fragments of painted plaster. This is the case, for example, with a clearly visible fragment on the top of the personification of the sea, which retains only a red band on a blue background (Fig. 9). Likewise, a large painted panel adheres to the first layer of painted plaster on the western end of the south wall of the nave. It represents a holy rider on a red horse, carrying a lance in his right hand and a shield in his left (Fig. 13). Contrary to the current tradition, the equestrian saint is not oriented to the east towards the apse, but to the west, towards a female figure wearing the bliaut without a veil. The divine hand emerging from the celestial segment is shown in the upper western corner of the scene. The entire lower part of the image is gone.

<sup>19</sup> Lévon Nordiguian, “Trois chapelles médiévales de Bziza (Koura)”, *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 66 (2016-2015): 397-405; Immerzeel, *Identity puzzles...*, 93-94; Dodd, *Medieval painting in the Lebanon...*, 93; Lévon Nordiguian, “La chapelle peinte de Saydet Hamatour dans le Koura”, *Chronos* 1 (1998): 67-89.

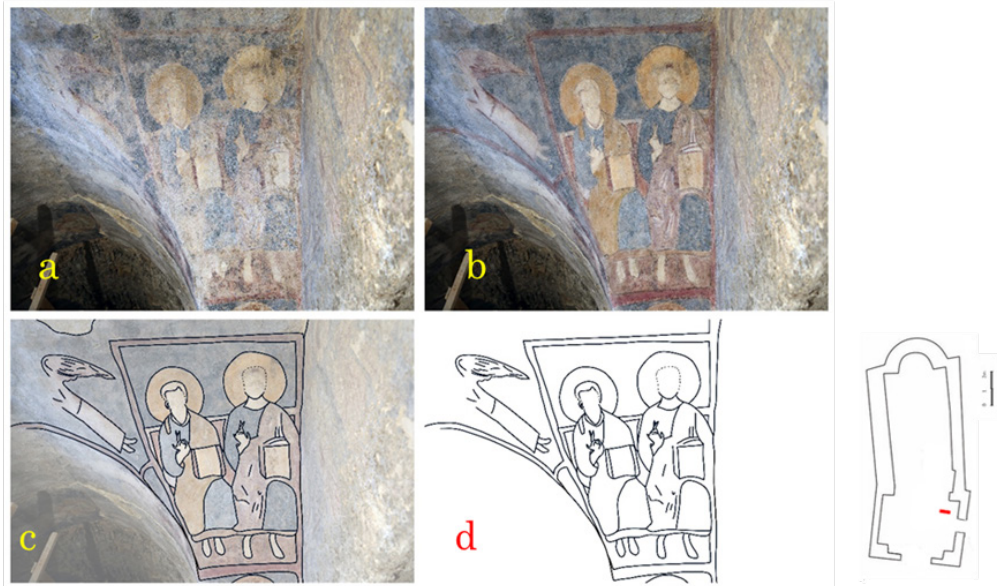


Figure 8. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the eastern side of the south barrels of the groin vault, two enthroned apostles. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction, c. Graphic drawing, d. Graphic drawing. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

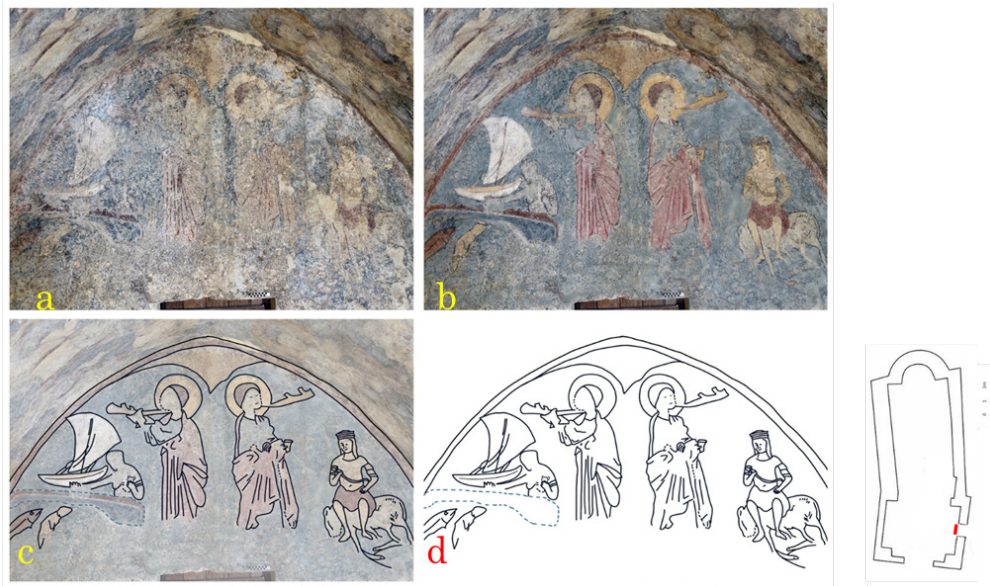


Figure 9. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the lunette on the south wall. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction, c. Graphic drawing, d. Graphic drawing. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.



Figure 10. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the lunette on the south wall, the water filled with fish and sea creatures. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.



Figure 11. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the west side of the south-eastern support of the entrance porch, a haloed figure. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction, c. Graphic drawing, d. Graphic drawing. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.



Figure 12. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the north side of the south-western support of the entrance porch, stylized skulls. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

The image of the holy rider with the female figure, the only one more or less readable before the conservation work, has been identified as a western representation of Saint George delivering the princess, as this theme is apparently not common in the eastern iconographic tradition<sup>20</sup>. However, George, who was very popular in both the Eastern and Western world, is often depicted riding a white horse, not a red one, as is the case in Enfeh. The red horse is usually attributed to the iconography of Saint Theodore, who was also a renowned holy soldier.

From this perspective, the female figure, with her hands clasped in prayer, could represent a supplicant. It is also known that Saint Theodore is often associated with Saint George, and that their iconography could be merged. In Mar Tadros of Behdidat (thirteenth century), the image of Theodore riding a red horse and killing a serpentine monster parallels the image of Saint George riding a white horse and saving the youth of Mytilene. Of the Greek inscription identifying the soldier in Enfeh, only the Greek letter “ε” remains, which could correspond to the second letter of the Greek name of Theodore, Θεόδωρος, or that of George, Γεώργιος, or to another holy soldier with an ‘ε’ in his name. The iconographic

<sup>20</sup> Immerzeel, *Identity puzzles...*, 88; Nordiguian et Voisin, *Châteaux et églises du Moyen Age au Liban...*, 381; Dodd, *Medieval painting in the Lebanon...*, 226.



and epigraphic elements do not make it possible for us to decide on the identity of the rider of Enfeh. It could be Theodore or any of the other holy soldiers venerated in Enfeh usually represented on a red horse. In any case, the theme of the holy rider is a very popular one in the

East<sup>21</sup>. One can see it in Mar Tadros of Beḥdidat, in Mar Saba of Edde el-Batroun in present-day Lebanon, in Mar Moussa el-Ḥabachi of Nabek, and in Saint Sergius and Bacchus of Qara in Syria, among others.

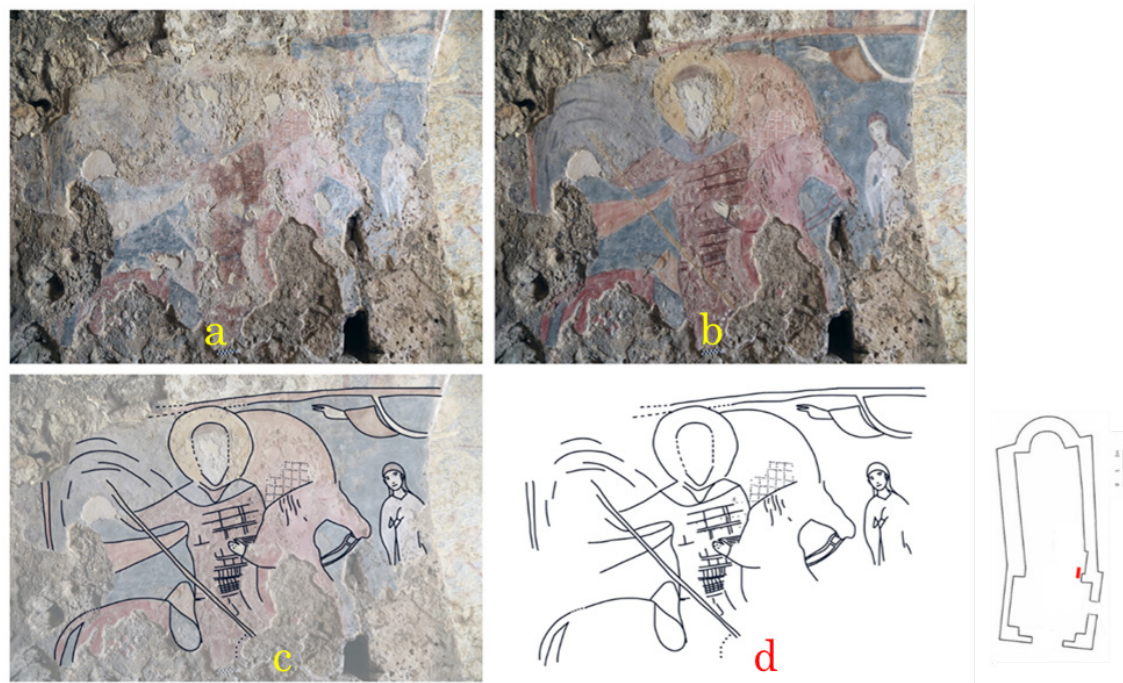


Figure 13. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the western end of the south wall of the nave, the holy rider with a female figure. a. Current state, b. Digital reconstruction, c. Graphic drawing, d. Graphic drawing. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

### 3. Stylistic processes through graphic survey

Despite the poor state of preservation and the fact that we can only generally discern the silhouettes of the figures *in situ*, graphic surveys and the digital reconstruction of the paintings show that the first layer of painted plaster, including the Theophany-*Deësis*, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, the theory of saints (perhaps apostles and prophets, and at least one bishop), the Judgment and the fragments of the holy soldiers, seems to be carried out according to the stylistic procedures of the Byzantine tradition, or the so-called *maniera graeca*<sup>22</sup>, which one can see in Saydet el Kharayeb in Kfar Hilda, in Mar Sarkis and Bakhos in Kaftun (thirteenth century), and elsewhere in present-day Lebanon. The execution of the figures, which is clearly preceded by a preparatory drawing applied in dark red (Fig. 14), features a high quality of drawing, a pronounced plasticity and complex modelling obtained by the superposition of several

shades of colour enhanced by white lights (Fig. 15). In addition, some faces still clearly retain the green color of *proplasmos* (Fig. 14). As for the second layer of paint, featuring the image of a holy soldier accompanied by a female figure, it shows a clear preference for accentuated schematization and strong linearity. The shapes are well defined by lines, and the colours are applied in a flat manner, without any attempt at modelling or relief (Fig. 16). The play of light detected in the previous layer is totally absent here. These criteria appear to be related to the local oriental stylistic tradition, as is the case with the paintings in Mar Tadros of Behdidat, Mar Charbel Al-Qadim of Maad and Mar Semaan of Saqiet El-Kheit (second half of the thirteenth century), among other wall paintings in Present-day Lebanon<sup>23</sup>. However, these pictorial indices remain insufficient to develop a stylistic study of the two layers of paintings in Enfeh, or to situate them in their own chronological framework.

The archaeological study and the history of the monument could, however, refine the dating of the two pictorial layers at Enfeh. Indeed, most ecclesial paintings in Lebanon date from the period of Latin domination (1102–1289), and the painted plaster in Enfeh is one of them. According to archaeological analysis, the entrance

<sup>21</sup> Anthy Andronikou, "Southern Italy, Cyprus, and the Holy Land: A Tale of Parallel Aesthetics?", *Artbulletin The Art Bulletin* 99, no. 3 (2017): 6-29; Mat Immerzeel, "Holy Horsemen and Crusader Banners. Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria", *Eastern Christian Art* 1 (2004): 29-60.

<sup>22</sup> Nada Hérou, "Les fresques du Liban : maniera graeca ou maniera syriaca", in *The Syriac Renaissance*, eds. Herman Teule et al., *Eastern Christian studies* 9 (Leuven/Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2010), 293-310.

<sup>23</sup> Hérou, "Les fresques du Liban...", 293-310.

porch of the church was added during the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>24</sup>, so it is obvious that the paintings adorning its walls cannot go back beyond this period. The same goes for the first layer of paintings adorning the rest of the church, because it is the same layer of painted plaster that spreads out to the entrance porch. In this perspective, the second layer of paintings, the most recent, to which the image of

the holy soldier with the female figure belongs, should also belong to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, because the church was abandoned after the departure of the Latins in 1289. It can be deduced that the two layers of painted plaster in Saydet El-Rih at Enfeh are results of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but certainly belong to two different campaigns<sup>25</sup>.



Figure 14. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the western end of the north side of the barrel vault, a bishop. Stratigraphic survey: a. Current state, b. Preparatory drawing and green colour of *proplasma*, c. Application of colour. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.



Figure 8. Detail. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the western side of the south barrels of the groin vault, two enthroned Apostolos. Stratigraphic survey: a. Current state, b. Application of colours, c. Several shades of blue and yellow, d. White hatching. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

<sup>24</sup> Panayot-Haroun, "Anfeh Unveiled...", 403; Panayot-Haroun et al., "Mission archéologique d'Enfeh...", 242.

<sup>25</sup> Nasr, "The Newly Discovered Paintings of Saydet El-Rih in Enfeh (Lebanon)".



Figure 13. Detail. Enfeh, Saydet El-Rih, the western end of the south wall of the nave, the holy rider with a female figure. Stratigraphic survey: a. Current state, b. Application of colours, c. Dark lines with geometric and decorative patterns. Source: Rafca Youssef Nasr.

#### 4. Conclusions

Graphic surveys provided a faithful and objective reading of the iconographic and stylistic content of the poorly preserved and barely discernible paintings at Saydet el-Rih. For this purpose, the remaining drawings and colours were graphically recorded and restored. It was possible to identify two layers of paintings showing scenes and figures in vogue in the region. The first, the oldest,

features a Theophany-*Deësis*, the sacrifice of Isaac, the theory of saints (perhaps apostles and prophets, and at least one bishop), the holy soldiers, and the Judgment scene. The second layer shows the image of a holy rider accompanied by a female figure. The graphic survey reveals a noticeably different rendering between the two layers of painting. The stylistic process of the first layer reflects criteria from the Byzantine tradition, whereas the second layer belongs to local stylistic tradition.

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